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THE THOMAS T. TAYLOR FAMILY AND  
GENDER RELATIONS DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the degree Master of Arts in the  
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

by

Raymond Maxwell Platt, B.S.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Ohio State University

1993

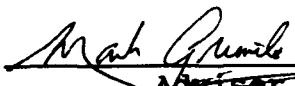
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## INTRODUCTION

The Civil War altered every facet of American society. Unprecedented numbers of American women were forced to assume the role of head of household. They were left in charge of farms, households, children, and businesses while their husbands fought a conflict previously unmatched in its level of destruction and bloodshed. Of the men who left their families for the war, 620,000 never returned home, thereby changing the lives of many American women forever.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will scrutinize approximately 450 letters written between Union Major Thomas T. Taylor and his wife, Margaret "Maggie" Taylor (300 from Taylor; 150 from Maggie). The Taylors lived in Georgetown, Ohio, a bustling town on the Ohio River in Brown County about 30 miles southeast of Cincinnati. The impact of the war upon the Taylors' marriage and their gender roles and relations will be examined in detail.

Civil War collections which include wives' letters, such as the Taylor collection, are relatively rare. Combat conditions, foul weather, and limited storage space at the front-lines hampered the efforts of many soldiers to bring

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Maslowski and Allan R. Millett, For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 229.

their wives' letters home. Nonetheless, the study of gender roles and relations requires the researcher to look into the private lives of the subjects. Without extensive exploration of collections like that left by the Taylors, it would be impossible to grasp the full impact that the Civil War exerted on gender roles and relations. The emotional subtleties contained in their letters provide the researcher with a vivid picture of the close relationship and open, honest communications between a mid-nineteenth century husband and wife. While notable works like the Cormany family diaries, Mary Boykin Chesnut's A Diary from Dixie, and Maria Lydig Daly's Diary of a Union Lady: 1861-1865 contain primary material that reveals certain aspects of gender roles and relations during the war, they fall short of the Taylor collection on a number of points where this paper is concerned.<sup>2</sup> The Taylor correspondence provided this researcher with an intimate look into the actual communication between a man and wife during what is probably the most traumatic experience a married couple can endure.

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<sup>2</sup>James C. Mohr and Richard E. Winslow III, eds., The Cormany Diaries: A Northern Family in the Civil War (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982); Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary from Dixie, ed. Ben Ames Williams (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949); Maria Lydig Daly, Diary of a Union Lady: 1861-1865, ed. Harold Earl Hammond (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1962); see also, Richard Lee Canary, "A Literary Study of Selected Diaries of the American Civil War" (Master's thesis, School of English, The Ohio State University, 1966).

Case studies form a necessary avenue of research for the study of gender roles and relations. A broad, sweeping study of gender roles and relations cannot delve as intimately into the personal lives of its many subjects as can a single-family case study. The opinions formed by multiple case studies will provide scholars with avenues of exploration for future research which may lead to broad surveys that have lasting merit.<sup>3</sup>

Gender relations are the interactions between men and women in society. Gender roles define the parameters in which these interactions can occur. During the mid-nineteenth century, the gender roles played by husband and wife were traditional and straightforward. According to E. Anthony Rotundo,

The belief that women were clean and domestic suited them by nature to maintain a home, and the assumption that they were pious and pure fitted them to raise the children and act as a conscience to their husbands. A man's duties in marriage were envisioned by a similar process. Since men were considered naturally active and courageous, it followed readily that they should go out into the world to play the role of breadwinner.<sup>4</sup>

The expected role of a woman in the mid-nineteenth century was that of wife, mother, and moral guardian. The expected

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<sup>3</sup>These beliefs are shared by, among others, Joan Cashin; see: Joan Cashin, "'Since the War Broke Out': The Marriage of Kate and William McLure," in Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 200, 212.

<sup>4</sup>E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 132.



role of a man during this period was that of husband, father, and provider.<sup>5</sup>

An examination of the changes in gender roles and relations during the Civil War is necessary because the contribution of women during the war merits extended scrutiny, and there is relatively little existing research on this topic.<sup>6</sup> Until recently, gender relations were considered inflammatory or irrelevant in "a history rooted in the ideas of an unrepresentative Protestant elite of ministers, lawyers, and political leaders."<sup>7</sup> However, this long neglect is quickly coming to an end as many historians recognize that women played an integral role in both the North and South during the war. Women, according to LeeAnn Whites, filled previously male-dominated positions during this period, which could be viewed as the infancy of a heightened awareness toward the relevance of women in all facets of American society.<sup>8</sup> An examination of the changes

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<sup>5</sup>G.J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton, Portraits of American Women: From Settlement to the Present (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 139; Rotundo, 132.

<sup>6</sup>Catherine Clinton, The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), vii.

<sup>7</sup>Alice Kessler-Harris, "Social History," in The New American History, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 165; Maris A. Vinovskis, ed. Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup>LeeAnn Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender," in Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War, eds.

in gender roles and relations during the Civil War also provides historians with a new way to look at the experiences of men.<sup>9</sup>

Although the literature regarding gender roles and relations during the Civil War era is limited, much of it is of high quality. The majority of the literature discussing women's issues during the Civil War deals mainly with the secondary efforts of women in their supportive roles. For example, Mary Elizabeth Massey's Bonnet Brigades describes the experiences of camp followers and nurses during the campaigns of the war. These women mended socks, made uniforms and bandages, did laundry, and dug graves.<sup>10</sup> Other articles such as Jeanie Attie's "Warwork and the Crisis of Domesticity in the North," in Clinton and Silber's Divided Houses, offer insights into the efforts of women to organize these traditional activities through agencies like the United States Sanitary Commission.<sup>11</sup>

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Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-21.

<sup>9</sup>For more on this perspective, see: Reid Mitchell, The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup>Mary Elizabeth Massey, Bonnet Brigades (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), especially Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>11</sup>Jeanie Attie, "Warwork and the Crisis of Domesticity in the North," in Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 247-259.

Drew Gilpin Faust, in her introduction to Augusta Jane Evans' Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice, which Evans wrote to persuade Southern women to actively contribute and participate in the conflict, discusses how integral Southern white women were to the Confederate war effort. Faust wrote that in the South, where resources were "stretched to the utmost," women were persuaded to perform "civilian support services that had heretofore been the exclusive province of males."<sup>12</sup>

George Rable, in his Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism, wrote,

Many lives would change dramatically during the war as women temporarily divided their attention between familiar domestic tasks and other, less conventional work on plantations, in hospitals, in businesses, in schoolrooms, in offices, and even in munitions factories. . . . Men and women alike seem to have assumed that wartime arrangements would be temporary, that women still performed largely auxiliary tasks in the economy, and that peace would return women to the domestic circle.<sup>13</sup>

While the authors mentioned above have written excellent works dealing with women's issues, most authors have written about the Civil War from an implicitly male perspective, dwelling heavily upon military-related topics. Consequently, modern authors exploring social history are

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<sup>12</sup>Augusta Jane Evans, Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), xiv.

<sup>13</sup>George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 112.

just beginning to understand the significance of gender relations, especially women's issues.

Many historians, such as LeeAnn Whites, Joan Cashin, Catherine Clinton, and James M. McPherson mark the American Civil War as a watershed in the history of gender relations in the United States. The suffrage movement, temperance societies, sanitary commissions, and the movement of large numbers of women into the public sector all characterized women's attempts to gain influence in what was a highly male-dominated society. Women used their perceived status as ideal mothers and wives to further their cause for equality in American society.<sup>14</sup> This period saw the germination of the feminist movement in America and women's groups around the country became more vocal.

While the majority of historians agree that the Civil War had lasting social impact upon the foundations of the male-dominated American society, there are historians, such as George Rable, who see the American Civil War as a conflict with few lasting repercussions where gender roles and relations are concerned. These historians have found that once the war was over, many women wanted nothing to do with a movement that usurped the power of men and threatened their concept of the ideal home. As Rable points out, many Southern women longed for the return of the hierarchical

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<sup>14</sup>Rotundo, 139.

traditions of the Old South where racial, social, and sexual relations were concerned.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Mary Elizabeth Massey believes that the Civil War gave all women a chance to develop latent talents, of which they took full advantage to increase their voice and stature in American society. However, she admits that immediately before the start of the Civil War, "The majority of Northern and Western women and virtually all in the South viewed feminist crusaders with indifference, curiosity, derision, disgust, or apathy. . ."<sup>16</sup> The Taylor family case study accords more closely to Rable's view and is in direct contradiction to Massey's claim. Despite Maggie's obvious ability to mentally and physically perform the duties that her husband normally would have, she preferred to return to the traditional role of wife and mother upon Taylor's return.

The years preceding the Civil War were a time of great change in America. During the antebellum years, the division of women's and men's spheres became more clearly defined. The development of centralized manufacturing, the "Waltham system," which shifted the production of a number of goods from the individual household to the factory, had the most immediate effect on women. With the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, the cottage system became

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<sup>15</sup>Rable, ix-xii, 268.

<sup>16</sup>Massey, 24.

outdated, and household production fell in economic importance. While many men moved on to wage-paying jobs in the public sector, the majority of women performed domestic labor at home.<sup>17</sup> According to G.J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton, women were now identified with "the home or private domain, where their duties included maintenance of family stability, protection of traditional values, and advancement of children's welfare," while men were identified with "all other realms outside the household, including politics, law and business."<sup>18</sup>

The antebellum period marked the apex of the "cult of domesticity," which redefined the home as women's domain. The media socialized most American women to this mythical ideal through periodicals.<sup>19</sup> The "cult of domesticity" was an attempt to justify the relevance of traditional women's work in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and the collapse of the colonial system of household production.<sup>20</sup>

According to Catherine Clinton, "By far, most females during the antebellum era were concerned with their roles in the home and the expanding realm of 'domesticity,' which was

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<sup>17</sup>Barker-Benfield and Clinton, 139.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Clinton, The Other Civil War, 40.

<sup>20</sup>Barker-Benfield and Clinton, 139-141.

increasingly regarded as women's domain."<sup>21</sup> However, the onset of the Civil War altered the image of women's domain. Many women were forced to assume the role of head of household in their husband's stead. The idyllic home as defined by the "cult of domesticity" could not exist in the prolonged absence of male loved ones, because an integral part of the family was absent. Men were the heads of household in most instances, but the war took them away and women had to take over and perform duties for which many had not been prepared.

This change, however, was not sudden for many women. With the Industrial Revolution, some men spent increasing amounts of time away from home. Urbanization led to the need for mass-produced goods and the city became the center of industrialization. With urbanization, the need for numerous children to work the family farm diminished, resulting in a decline in the birth rate.<sup>22</sup> With this decline, the traditional role of mother was not as time-consuming as before. Women refocused their energies in order to provide a 'perfect' home for their family in pursuit of the ideals of the "cult of domesticity."<sup>23</sup> The Civil War disrupted many homes by separating families and

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<sup>21</sup>Clinton, The Other Civil War, ix.

<sup>22</sup>James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 9-10.

<sup>23</sup>Clinton, The Other Civil War, 41-42.

forcing many women to leap off of the pedestal constructed<sup>11</sup> by the "cult of domesticity." Many women could no longer depend on their husbands to provide more than a paycheck and advice on how to run the household.

The Civil War was fought between two male-dominated societies. The war reinforced the traditional gender conceptions of men as warriors and women as wives and mothers. As Jean Bethke Elshtain claimed in Women and War, the Civil War exemplified "women's social location as civic republican mothers, the daughters of Sparta, their militancy somewhat softened by moral queasiness concerning violence and by reigning views of motherhood."<sup>24</sup> Women were not allowed to serve in a combat role in either the Union or Confederate army, yet understood the civic duty that their men had to perform. Although many of their sons and husbands were ~~sure~~ to die, women cheered their men as they marched off to war.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, eligible men who did not volunteer to fight were seen as cowards, weaklings, and found undesirable by many women.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), 93.

<sup>25</sup>Reid Mitchell, "The Northern Soldier and His Community," in Towards a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 83; Clinton and Silber, Divided Houses, 39.

<sup>26</sup>Mitchell, "The Northern Soldier and His Community," 83-84.



Four years of war soured some of these "daughters of Sparta" to the status quo antebellum where gender roles and relations were concerned.<sup>27</sup> These women were left behind to run the household in the absence of men who had done run the household before the war and some liked the independence and authority that they gained in their husband's absence. Consequently, after several years of surviving in the absence of a husband, some women decided that the days of the husband-dominated household were gone forever.<sup>28</sup> However, this was not the case in the Taylor marriage. Maggie Taylor's transition from wife and mother to head of the Taylor household was as quick as the start of the war itself. When Thomas Taylor left for Camp Dennison in 1861, Maggie Taylor began to exercise control of the daily affairs of the Taylor family, but did so with explicit directions from her husband. By the summer of 1864, Mrs. Taylor had perfected most of the tasks previously reserved for her husband. She was proficient in all of them after three straight years of learning how to handle the Taylors' assets. Maggie Taylor also had three young sons to raise (one of whom was born during the war), while at the same time she oversaw entirely the Taylor family's holdings in Georgetown. Despite the growing discontent of many women

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<sup>27</sup>Elshtain, 93.

<sup>28</sup>Cashin, 200-212.

with the status quo as defined by the "cult of domesticity" and time-honored traditions, Maggie Taylor herself was content to relinquish household control once her husband returned from the war.<sup>29</sup> She desired to return to her former role as wife and mother as long as her beloved husband returned home safely.

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<sup>29</sup>Massey, 3.

## CHAPTER I

### CONTEXT OF THE TAYLOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

At the start of the Civil War, the Taylors were a fairly successful couple in their middle twenties. A relative newcomer to Ohio, Thomas Taylor had moved from his home in New Jersey to Georgetown, Ohio, where he first arrived on 23 June 1855.<sup>30</sup> After attending law school in New Jersey, Taylor returned for good and soon met Chilton White, a prominent southwest Ohio lawyer and politician.<sup>31</sup> White befriended Taylor and made him a one-fifth partner in the law firm of White, McKnight, and White. Through Chilton, Taylor met his future wife, Margaret A. White, Chilton's oldest sister. Taylor's marriage to Maggie White completed his rapid rise to prominence in Brown County, as it cemented his ties to the one of the most powerful families in southwest Ohio.

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<sup>30</sup>The Thomas Thomson Taylor Collection, Manuscript #MSS7, 2 boxes, Ohio Historical Society; Papers, 1861-1865. Box 1, Folder 7, 3 June 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>31</sup>The History of Brown County, Ohio (Chicago: W.H. Beers and Company, 1883), 47-48.

On 19 January 1858, Thomas Taylor and Maggie White were married.<sup>32</sup> Eight months later, Taylor revived the Democratic Standard, one of Brown County's first newspapers. In May 1859, Taylor sold his interest in the newspaper. With the proceeds from the sale, Taylor bought an interest in Brown County's only drug store.<sup>33</sup> At the compilation of the 1860 United States Census, Taylor had a new son (Miles), seven hundred dollars' worth of personal property, and was prosecuting attorney of Brown County, a post that he held until 1863.<sup>34</sup>

Maggie Taylor grew up in a wealthy, prominent family that provided her with opportunities not afforded many women of her day. Maggie Taylor was an educated woman. She honed her academic skills under her father's tutelage. The Georgetown area's schoolmaster, John D. White, supplied Maggie with an education that is evident in every letter she wrote to her husband.<sup>35</sup> She rarely misspelled words and her grammar was generally flawless.

Immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter in April 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to

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<sup>32</sup>Brown County, Ohio, Marriage Return No. 7,673, Book 1, 122.

<sup>33</sup>History of Brown County, 399.

<sup>34</sup>Eighth United States Census, 1860, Pleasant Township, Brown County, Ohio; History of Brown County, 361.

<sup>35</sup>History of Brown County, 47-48.

preserve the Union.<sup>36</sup> Carr White, the older brother of Chilton and Maggie, organized the first company of volunteers ready for service to the Governor of Ohio.<sup>37</sup> Governor William Dennison accepted the company and Carr White became Colonel of the Twelfth Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry in three months' service. Taylor was elected a second lieutenant in the regiment, a result of his link with the White family and position as prosecuting attorney.<sup>38</sup>

Taylor possessed the usual unexamined faith in what historians, such as Gerda Lerner, have learned to call patriarchy. Lerner states, "Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general."<sup>39</sup> According to legal historian Michael Grossberg, legal courts of the mid-nineteenth century came to recognize "separate legal spheres in the home" with "enlarged . . . rights" for the wife and mother. However, Grossberg continued, "Patriarchy retained its legal primacy, . . . The domesticated concept of patriarchy depended on the

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<sup>36</sup>Bell I. Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1952), 17-22; Maslowski and Millett, 165.

<sup>37</sup>History of Brown County, 336.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 239.

segregation of worldly male from home-bound female functions . . ."<sup>40</sup> Taylor fit this mold. He believed that everything his family had flowed from his generous hands and hard work. This is evident in his 10 August 1862 letter to his wife which stated,

Then 'my' home, 'my' family, and 'my' wife--how touching and how striking the assertion--the pronoun 'my' denoting sole ownership, an exclusive right, a part of oneself--issuing and deriving its existence from me--surviving while I live, perishing when I die.<sup>41</sup>

Taylor asserted himself as head of his household on many occasions throughout the war. The roots of Taylor's determined masculinity and dominance over his family ran deep and he possessed a distinct ideal of masculinity when he left for the war in 1861. In his 23 May 1861 letter to Maggie, Taylor wrote,

Females are unable to do duty on the [battle]field, men alone are permitted to make sacrifices there. Women are compelled to display their patriotism in another sphere, to make their sacrifices at the domestic shrine, to gird the armor on husband, son and brother and with smiles bid them to defend their country's standard and their country's honor. . . . Women naturally exist in a more quiet, holier sphere, their acts are confined to it, their course directed by it. Unlike man, her actions are not heralded to the world by papers and through all the approaches to the tumultuous world. . .<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Michael Grossberg, Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 27.

<sup>41</sup>Taylor Collection, Box 1, Folder 8, 10 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 23 May 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Taylor's ideal of masculinity was tempered in war and he became obsessed with proving that he could live up to his ideal self. This attempt by Taylor to self-actualize did not go unnoticed by Maggie. In her 29 January 1863 letter to her husband, Maggie stated, "You know my husband, I do not doubt your love for us, but you are led on by that wild infatuation, that ever follows the ambitions in military life." Continuing, Maggie showed that she did not share Taylor's infatuation: "I beg of you to break the spell, and be content to remain with us."<sup>43</sup>

Taylor, however, never broke the spell that the war cast over him. At the close of the war in March 1865, he wrote a discourse to his wife concerning his participation in the war. He believed that the war was necessary in the larger scheme of things, more important than the day to day dealings of the individual family. He told Maggie, "Realizing this great responsibility [to his nation and family] I willingly and cheerfully endure many things and suffer many things." Thus, Taylor was willing to suffer for a brief period so that his family and future generations would not have to live in a divided country.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Folder 10, 29 January 1863 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 2, 17 March 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

While Taylor thrived on military life, he realized that a change of personality and attitude came with fighting a war for many men. Taylor believed war the ultimate test of his masculinity, but the masculinity he prized took on a life of its own during war. He stated in his 25 August 1862 letter to Maggie, "This war does make us semi-barbarians, changes our taste, appetite and feelings. Of mild and effeminate men it makes stern, inflexible and masculine--blood thirsty . . ."<sup>45</sup>

Like his concepts of masculinity, Taylor's attitudes towards women and the ideal woman as identified by the "cult of domesticity" remained consistent throughout the course of the war. Taylor contrasted his thoughts about men and women in a letter from western Virginia written early in the war. He told Maggie, "This [his military camp] is no place for females unless they are accompanied with some one who knows the world--lone women are frequently insulted and shocked."<sup>46</sup> Taylor followed this with an account of two young women. These "unsophisticated" women came into his camp unaware of their dangerous surroundings. Mistaken for prostitutes, these two women were chased by wild, young soldiers until they convinced the soldiers they were not for

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 8, 25 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 22 January 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.



sale. This letter suggests that Taylor felt only men could<sup>20</sup> know "the world" and that the military camp was fine for strong men, but weak women beware.

During his military travels, Taylor spent the majority of his time in the heart of the Confederacy. This afforded him many opportunities to compare women from both the North and South. Taylor took great pleasure in this endeavour and reported to his wife his every find. Taylor was appalled at the conditions in the South under which women operated during the war. For example, Taylor's observation of the dams and great falls of the Potomac River prompted him to ask his wife, "At one of these locks I saw a woman opening them and otherwise attending to them. Would a Northern woman do such work?"<sup>47</sup> His observations of Southern women did not end with their work habits. While stationed at Cleveland, Tennessee, Taylor wrote to his wife about "soiries" [sic] to which he was invited that gave him "an opportunity . . . to test the understanding of the ladies--their manners, education, accomplishments, etc. . . ." He concluded, "I could not well take any one but Mrs. Netta [short for Maggie's middle name, Antoinette] Taylor as the most complete lady of my acquaintance."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 3, 23 April 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 15, 1 March 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Maggie Taylor was the epitome of the ideal woman set forth by the media via "the cult of domesticity." She stayed at home and took care of her family while her husband went off into the outside world to support his family. She did not care for her added responsibilities during Taylor's absence and frequently lamented that he return from the war so that she could once again wait on him.<sup>49</sup>

Maggie's wish to have her husband home during the Civil War was seldom granted. Taylor received a total of four 30-day furloughs: in December 1862, March 1863, April 1864, and January 1865. Otherwise, face-to-face contact between the Taylors was sparse. Therefore, the Taylors kept their marriage alive through active communication. The 450 letters in their collection are a testimony to their pledges to write each other at least twice each week.<sup>50</sup> This commitment increased to three letters per week by war's end.<sup>51</sup> However, the mail service during the Civil War was mediocre at best, and delivery of these "precious epistles" was haphazard. Delays spanning several weeks were often incurred, causing a great deal of stress. Even worse, some

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 1, 5 January 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1, 26 May 1861 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 7 June 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

letters were lost or destroyed.<sup>52</sup> This frequently caused the Taylors to become extremely upset with each other, since both tended to assume (erroneously) that the other was reneging on their commitment to correspond regularly.

In early September 1864, after thirteen straight days in the field, Taylor came back to the Army of the Tennessee's field headquarters to find no mail waiting for him. In his 8 September 1864 letter to Maggie, Taylor admonished his wife severely for not writing him more often and even threatened to cut off communication with her as punishment.<sup>53</sup> It is apparent that Taylor disregarded the mail system's irregularity of delivery and rebuked his wife for something that was out of her control.

The content of the Taylor correspondence ranged from the strictly informative to the highly personal. While no two letters were alike, their letters had many common themes. Taylor usually began his letters "My dearest Wife" and ended them "Affectionately Yours, T.T. Taylor." In between, his letters gave instructions, advice, and loving reassurances to his wife. On occasion, Taylor described his surroundings, camp life, and the perils of combat. (This occurred frequently during his campaigns with Sherman's

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Folder 8, 13 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 8 September 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Army.) However, when Taylor became frustrated with the war and delays in correspondence, he wrote depressing letters full of self pity and anger. In these, he lashed out at the person he loved the most, Maggie.

Within days of an angry letter, however, Taylor would send an apology brimming with accolades of love. While Maggie was generally dismayed by her husband's fits of emotion, she rarely lashed back at him. The majority of her letters were highly informative about life in Georgetown. She discussed the children, business dealings, family health and welfare, and gave news of friends and neighbors. Although capable of expressing fervent love for Taylor, Maggie sometimes cut him to the quick with biting sarcasm. Indeed, a number of Maggie's letters lacked the emotional content that exuded from her husband's communication. Though on such occasions Taylor chastised his wife for being cold and distant in her letters, Maggie told her husband that the time required for her to tend to their children and properties left her little time to write anything other than that which was absolutely necessary.

The Taylors were well-established in Georgetown at the beginning of the Civil War. As part of a prominent political family, they were in a position that afforded them opportunities and insight not granted to many young couples. Their previous academic educations and traditional gender indoctrinations coupled with intense political, racial, and

social turmoil to produce an atmosphere that demanded open communication for the survival of their marriage. At the onset of the Civil War, these lines of communication were set and the Taylors rigorously adhered to them in order to keep their marriage alive.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICS AND WAR MATTERS

The harsh fires of the Civil War exposed many of the Taylors' wide-ranging beliefs and social indoctrinations. The strain of war and the lengthy, enforced separations tested many of their political, racial, and social beliefs. The issues surrounding the preservation of the Union, the abolition of slavery, and the Constitutionality of the secession of the Southern states were just a few of the issues that embroiled the Taylors and the rest of the United States during the Civil War. Discussion concerning these issues frequently became heated and actions taken to support and defend positions on these issues often led to conflict among individuals, much as these volatile issues had between North and South. The Taylors openly discussed these issues and both Taylor and Maggie offered opinions and took action on various issues relating to politics and war matters over the course of the conflict.

Southwestern Ohio was a hotbed of political turmoil during the Civil War. The area contained many diverse political views, such as abolitionists, Unionists, Butternuts (Confederate sympathizers), "legitimist" Democrats, War Democrats, Peace Democrats, and

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Republicans.<sup>54</sup> While the Butternuts were the only political one of these groups that believed secession of the Southern states was not illegal, the others differed vehemently on courses of actions that the Federal government could take without itself trampling on the principles in the United States Constitution. The abolitionists, Republicans, and War Democrats teamed together to support the policies of the Lincoln Administration while the Unionists, "legitivist" Democrats, and Peace Democrats split along fine ideological lines in their opposition to Lincoln's handling of the war, but not the war to preserve the Union itself.<sup>55</sup>

Taylor was caught up in this environment and experienced its harshest consequences. Taylor, an ardent "legitivist" Democrat, was willing to fight under any Constitutionally-sanctioned conditions for the preservation of the Union so long as it would provide a better future for the country.<sup>56</sup> As a result, he became a zealot for the Union in Brown County and returned to Georgetown to fill the ranks of his unit after he mustered into military service in April 1861. Taylor recruited heavily from the workers in

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<sup>54</sup>For clarification of these political terms and a description of the Democratic party during the Civil War era, see: Joel H. Silbey, A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), especially 89-114.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Taylor Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, 28 April 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Georgetown and in the process made enemies out of many prominent men in the community.

The events of 27 July 1861 were a watershed in the Taylor family's destiny. Before that date, it was probable that Taylor would remain in Georgetown after the war and eventually take over Chilton White's partnership in the law firm. After that date, the volatile political issues that tore apart the United States wreaked havoc upon the Taylor family as Taylor began to question his desire to keep his family in Georgetown after the war because of the dastardly actions of a select group of Georgetown citizens.

Taylor believed that military service to one's country was an obligation. He despised men who did not share his views about the preservation of the Union. Taylor became disillusioned with the men of his area as most, he believed, were concerned about nothing more than personal achievement at the expense of their nation and unit effectiveness.<sup>57</sup> On 27 July 1861, Taylor and some of his recruits were about to leave for western Virginia when a small crowd gathered to send them off to war. However, this was not a cheerful farewell for Taylor and his men. This crowd was composed of angry protesters who scoffed at Taylor and his men for their decision to fight for the Union. In his 20 April 1862 letter to his wife reminding her of the events of 27 July

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 28 July 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.



1861, Taylor expressed his bitterness toward the people of Georgetown and how it made his resolve for fighting the war even stronger.<sup>58</sup>

Immediately after the events of 27 July 1861, Taylor expressed his wish to have his family leave Georgetown permanently.<sup>59</sup> This is a feeling he did not soon shake. Taylor stated in his 28 April 1862 letter to Maggie, "What sovereign contempt I cherish for Georgetown--did I possess the power I would blot it out almost as soon as Charlestown [sic], S.C.--I can never forget it--never!"<sup>60</sup>

Maggie did not relish the idea of leaving Georgetown. Taylor had left his family in New Jersey to come to Ohio. If the Taylors left Georgetown, they would have no direct ties to either side of their family. Throughout May, June, and July 1862, Maggie expressed her desire to remain in Georgetown with her family.<sup>61</sup> Throughout this time, Thomas told her that he would listen to her arguments concerning

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Folder 6, 20 April 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 28 July 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Folder 6, 28 April 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Folder 7, 2 July 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

the possibility of leaving Georgetown and would give them "the proper consideration."<sup>62</sup> This brief comment reveals three facts about power and choice in the Taylors' marriage. First, Maggie felt free to give Taylor advice. Secondly, he listened to her advice and took it seriously. Third, the final authority to decide lay with Taylor.

In her 7 May 1862 letter, Maggie proved the three assumptions made concerning decision-making power in the Taylor family. In one of her more forceful, yet submissive letters, Maggie reassured Taylor that he did indeed have friends in Georgetown and that Brown County was where their family should reside after the war. She told Taylor,

Now do not talk to me about no friends, for I know you have friends here, yes in Georgetown, those who are proud of you. . . . Brown County is the county for you, and here is the place for you to establish yourself.

At the same time, however, Maggie said that if Taylor decided to leave, she would go with him.<sup>63</sup> This showed that in spite of Maggie's desire to be with her family, she would obey her husband's directives.

Despite Maggie's efforts to convince him otherwise, Taylor did not believe his wife's reassurances about prevailing attitudes in Georgetown. In reply to her 7 May

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Folder 6, 7 May 1862 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

1862 letter, Taylor asked his wife if the friends that she<sup>30</sup>  
felt he had in Georgetown were truly his friends.<sup>64</sup>

Taylor eventually stopped writing about his desire to leave Georgetown, but the 1870 United States Census Records for Brown County do not show the Taylors as residents.<sup>65</sup> Based on Maggie's devotion to Taylor, one may conclude that she would do what he deemed best for the family, even if that meant leaving Georgetown. However, while Maggie's family was in Georgetown, rifts almost tore the family apart during the war.

Maggie's brother, Chilton, was elected a representative in the 37th Congress of the United States from the Sixth Congressional District of Ohio and served two terms during the Civil War.<sup>66</sup> Although he had a brother and a brother-in-law fighting for the Union, both of whom believed the Lincoln Administration's decision to wage total war on the South was constitutional, Chilton White was outspoken in his opposition to Sherman's "hard-war" policy.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 19 May 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>65</sup>Ninth United States Census, 1870, All Townships, Brown County, Ohio.

<sup>66</sup>History of Brown County, 696-7.

As a wavering "legitimist" Democrat, Chilton White helped nominate General George B. McClellan for President at the 1864 Democratic Convention held in Chicago.<sup>67</sup>

In August of 1864, Taylor had deep personal interests at stake in the success of the Democratic ticket. He accused President Lincoln of usurping his executive powers in the prosecution of the Civil War where manning the Union armies were concerned.<sup>68</sup> Taylor also believed that he owed Chilton White his unadulterated support for his aid in Taylor's rapid rise to prominence in Brown County, no matter how much their views on prosecution of the war differed.<sup>69</sup>

On 21 August 1864, Taylor's three-year enlistment as a volunteer officer in the 47th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment expired. Maggie and the entire extended family in Georgetown beckoned for Taylor to leave the service at the end of his enlistment. Taylor submitted his official resignation to the War Department on several occasions; however, these requests were denied. War Department circular No. 111, dated 12 August 1864, stated that officers and men mustered in for three years under arms were

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<sup>67</sup>Taylor Collection, Box 1, Folder 18, 4 August 1864 letter from Chilton A. White to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 10 August 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor; this was the harshest of his many tirades written late in 1864.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 14 September 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

obligated for an unfixed term. Thus Taylor, despite his <sup>32</sup> many pleas, was required to remain in service to his government for the remainder of the war.<sup>70</sup>

Frustrated at not having been paid since February and weary from three months of continuous fighting, Taylor decried the order that all officers be held against their will for the duration of the conflict. He fumed that the federal government had breached the contract signed under the Act of 1861, which was enacted to govern volunteer troops.<sup>71</sup> He felt that his obligations in the war lay with the state of Ohio, not the "ignoble despotism" of Lincoln and the War Department.<sup>72</sup> Taylor wrote that he felt enslaved by the federal government, crying, "I am an American Slave of Anglo-Saxon descent--Abraham Lincoln is my master and [Major General] John A. Logan the man with the lash, standing o'er us and letting it fall with all its horrid force."<sup>73</sup>

Helpless in the matter, Taylor asked Maggie to give Chilton White documentation including the original contract that had mustered Taylor into the 47th Regiment Ohio

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Folder 18, 12 August 1864 War Department Circular No. 111; 22 August 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 17 August 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.; Logan was Taylor's corps commander.

Volunteer Infantry and the subsequent dictates which in Taylor's mind illegally overrode his original contract with the state of Ohio and the federal government.<sup>74</sup> Maggie, however, did not act as a passive go-between in this matter for her husband. Instead, she sharply questioned her husband's judgment. Upon receiving Taylor's directive on 4 September 1864, Maggie asked him to use caution when dealing with Chilton. Maggie stated that Chilton was not popular and never would be again, and that he would drag Taylor down with him if the opportunity presented itself. She also believed that Chilton would use the documentation to further his own political interests instead of helping Taylor, and, consequently, did not forward the manuscripts to her brother.<sup>75</sup>

Maggie's objections, it soon turned out, were well-founded. Taylor sent this directive to Maggie in the precarious days before the fall of Atlanta, Georgia. Before Atlanta fell, a distinct war weariness pervaded the North.<sup>76</sup> Many felt that if Atlanta did not fall before the election of 1864, the Democrats would have swept into power under the "four years of failure" plank and then proceed to negotiate

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 22 August 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 4 September 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>76</sup>McPherson, 774-777.

a settlement with the Confederacy to end hostilities.<sup>77</sup> 34  
However, Atlanta fell quickly, and the tide of the war turned. From that point on, the Union Army, the Republican Party, and, most importantly, the voters of the North knew the Confederacy was doomed.<sup>78</sup>

When Atlanta fell, Taylor realized that, politically, Chilton White was doomed, and that his own reputation rested on the success of the Union Army and the defeat of the Confederacy. Therefore, Taylor expressed his relief when he received his wife's letter of 4 September 1864. She had not forwarded the documents to Chilton pertaining to his "enslavement" by the War Department.<sup>79</sup>

Nonetheless, Taylor would not abandon Chilton after the fall of Atlanta, even though Chilton and the rest of the Democrats seemed politically bankrupt. When Chilton requested Taylor's support in his re-election bid to Congress in November 1864, he received it.<sup>80</sup> However, Chilton White lost his bid for re-election because the soldiers that mustered out of the service in the summer of

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Taylor Collection, Box 1, Folder 19, 14 September 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., Folder 18, 4 August 1864 letter from Chilton A. White to T.T. Taylor.

1864 voted overwhelmingly for Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party's ticket.<sup>81</sup>

Knowing that Maggie no longer trusted Chilton and felt that he would try to bring Taylor down with him politically, Taylor thoroughly explained to Maggie his reasons for standing by Chilton in spite of their political differences after the fall of the Confederacy was assured. Taylor also showed his wife the harshness of her judgment where Chilton was concerned in his 14 September 1864 letter, which stated,

Dear I do not proscribe Chilt, have ever been his friend, and am very anxious to secure his re-election--he befriended me--I will not desert him though all the world cry out against him. His fate is the fate of the family--if he shall fall, the reputation of the family will suffer . . .<sup>82</sup>

Despite Maggie's misgivings concerning Chilton, Taylor would not abandon him in his hour of political need. Taylor allowed Maggie to express her opinions concerning vital war matters, but, in the end, his actions spoke louder than her words.

However, Maggie's words were heard on more than this one occasion. In Taylor's absence, Maggie evolved into an opinionated woman. She grew less shy about expressing her many political, racial, and social concerns and ideas to her husband. For example, Maggie ardently opposed the secession

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 14 September 1864 letter from T.T. Taylor to M.A. Taylor; History of Brown County, 48.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.



of the southern states and did not want to see the Union divided. On 23 May 1861, Maggie wrote, "I do pray that God in his infinite mercy will open the eyes of those wicked men and that they may see the error of their ways, and stop before it is forever too late. This government is too good a government to be destroyed."<sup>83</sup> By the middle of 1862, however, it was evident that the war was being fought not only to save the Union, but for the abolition of slavery as well. Maggie was not in favor of fighting for the abolition of slavery and suggested that her husband should not. In her 1 June 1862 letter to her husband, Maggie stated,

From the turn affairs have taken, if I were a soldier I would feel very much like laying down my arms and returning home. I would never fight for the equality of the negro. It would be a glorious thing for the country if the army would turn on the abolishinists [sic] and put them out of the way first.<sup>84</sup>

Maggie felt that the primary reasons for fighting the war were lost in the secondary concern of abolition. The preservation of the Union was her only concern.

Thus, their war correspondence suggests that Thomas and Maggie Taylor dealt with the problems presented by the war substantially as equals. Taylor gave Maggie's opinions the proper weight and Maggie, on occasion, intervened on her husband's behalf as circumstances dictated more viable

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 23 May 1861 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., Folder 7, 1 June 1862 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

avenues of actions, as in the situation where she did not<sup>37</sup>  
give Chilton the documentation after the fall of Atlanta  
when the tide of the war changed. However, Taylor was quick  
to assert his dominance when he felt he should and Maggie  
was quick to give in to her husband's wishes when he was  
adamant. This aspect characterized the Taylor's  
relationship and correspondence throughout the War.

CHAPTER III  
PERSONAL LIFE AND THE PAINS OF WAR

The word marriage means "to combine;" it is a union of two individual entities. The Civil War altered the traditional meaning of marriage for many couples, including the Taylors. From April 1861 to September 1865, the Taylor marriage was marred by lengthy separations that produced much tension and anxiety in both Thomas and Maggie. In her first letter of the war, Maggie described the loneliness of women left behind by their husbands who were experiencing the "noise and bustle of military life."<sup>85</sup> Maggie and her sister, Mollie, called Georgetown "Fort Desolation."<sup>86</sup>

Separation was difficult for the Taylors to bear. Several factors increased the anxiety they both felt. First and foremost was the constant fear for mutual safety at home and on the front-lines. In her 5 May 1861 letter, Maggie described the excitement and military preparation that was taking place in Ripley, Ohio, a community just south of Georgetown. She told him there was fear of an attack if

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., Folder 1, 5 May 1861 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

Kentucky left the Union.<sup>87</sup> This contributed to Taylor's<sup>39</sup>  
fear for his family's safety while he was away at Camp  
Dennison.<sup>88</sup>

A visit by Morgan's Raiders to Georgetown two years  
later increased Taylor's fears for his family's safety.  
Maggie wrote in her 16 July 1863 letter,

. . . about two hundred of Morgan's men made a raid  
through this place [Georgetown]. Our men had all gone  
to Ripley, but a few Butternuts, and of course we could  
make no defence [sic]. They robbed [sic] our stores and  
groceries, took just what they wanted. . . . They also  
took a great many horses. . . . They respected private  
property, entered but few dwellings and politely asked  
for something to eat, [they] did not give us a call. I  
saw two in the clover lot.<sup>89</sup> I suppose [they] were  
looking for horses. . . .<sup>89</sup>

Maggie Taylor constantly feared for Taylor's safety as  
well, but Taylor did little to assuage her fears for him.  
His vivid descriptions of battle and other events of the war  
scared his wife. In his 15 May 1862 correspondence to his  
wife, Taylor described Lewisburg, Virginia as such,

This is the bitterest place I ever saw--people all  
secesh except one and that one keeps his mouth shut.  
The women say they would like to cut our throats, even  
said so in the presence of one of our officers. She has  
a son in the Cavalry we drove off.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 4 August 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A.  
Taylor.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., Folder 10, 16 July 1863 letter from M.A. to  
T.T. Taylor.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., Folder 6, 15 May 1862 letter from T.T. to  
M.A. Taylor.

Taylor gave even more frightful and realistic descriptions of actual combat to Maggie. A colorful example came in his 29 June 1864 letter to his wife in which he described leading his men up a mountain full of rebel defensive lines. He wrote that he hid behind rocks and trees, and that every time he raised his head an enemy ball would "zip" past it, often knocking dirt and bark from the trees in his face.<sup>91</sup>

Taylor was wounded twice during the war. His first wound, "a glancing lick in the muscles of my left thigh," was received on 22 July 1864 in a skirmish outside of Atlanta.<sup>92</sup> His second wound was received when his right hand was shot through in the Union assault of Fort McAllister, Georgia on 13 December 1864.<sup>93</sup> In an attempt to allay his wife's fears about his hand wound, Taylor tried to be jocular about it. He wrote a week later (in a letter composed with his good left hand), "I shall not attempt a description of my wound--suffice it to say that I will

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., Folder 16, 29 June 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., Folder 17, 26 July 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>93</sup>Whitelaw Reid, Ohio in the War: Her Statesmen, Her Generals, and Soldiers, vol. 2: History of Her Regiments (Cincinnati, Ohio: Moore, Wilstach, and Baldwin, 1868), 295.

esteem it a proud souvenir of the storming of Fort MacAllister [sic] by the 2nd Division, 15th A.C."<sup>94</sup>

Taylor not only detailed his many combat experiences to Maggie, he also told her to prepare for the worst possible news from the battlefield: his death.<sup>95</sup> In August 1864, outside of Atlanta, Taylor drafted a will that was to be his last will and testament if he did not return from the March through Georgia. In this will, Taylor asserted his dominance over Maggie. He stated,

Should anything happen to prevent my returning home I want you to settle my business up and have the children educated. You can have the property in that case sold or not as you shall deem proper. Should you desire to marry again then dispose of the property and have it invested for the benefit of the boys to insure their education. If you remain single--unmarried--then use the proceeds to suit yourself and for your own good always remembering that it is of the highest importance to have your children educated.<sup>96</sup>

This will suggested that he was extremely possessive of his wife, and insisted on her lifelong fidelity in order for him to support her. In life or death, Taylor controlled his family's destiny.

The anxiety produced by their separation wore on the Taylors' patience. Taylor felt on several instances that

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<sup>94</sup>Taylor Collection, Box 1, Folder 19, 20 December 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., Folder 17, 14 July 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., Folder 18, August 1864 will from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Maggie was "growing cold" and "becoming estranged" as the<sup>42</sup> contents of her letters sometimes became despondent and, to Taylor, depressing.<sup>97</sup> Throughout the war, Maggie Taylor often complained that her life was dull and monotonous because her daily routine was the same day after day.<sup>98</sup> Taylor also felt war weariness. In his 14 November 1862 letter to Maggie, Taylor discussed leaving the service and said that his "patriotic fires" still burned, but "any event which will hasten my withdrawal from the service I shall welcome as the Harbenger [sic] of Good Will."<sup>99</sup>

To relieve their war weariness and the burdens of separation, the Taylors considered many solutions to their problems. While he was stationed in western Virginia during the latter part of 1861 and early in 1862, Taylor explored the option of bringing his family to him. Taylor attempted to secure a house for his family to share, but failed.<sup>100</sup>

The children were another source of anxiety for the Taylors. For example, in the middle of 1865, Taylor wanted his wife to come and visit him in Washington, D.C., where he

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., Folder 8, 7 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., Folder 11, 11 August 1863 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., Folder 9, 14 November 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 16 December 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

was practicing law at the United States Supreme Court. He asked her if she could "leave the children long enough [two weeks to a month]" to make the trip alone.<sup>101</sup> In reply to this request, Maggie stated that she would not be able to leave the children for that length of time, and that Taylor was more than welcome to come to them for a visit.<sup>102</sup>

When the Taylor family was reunited during the war, quality time for family togetherness was minimal. Maggie made efforts to provide niceties for her husband's furloughs. All she asked in return was that Taylor spend quality time with her and the rest of the family.<sup>103</sup>

A long distance relationship is difficult to maintain under the best of circumstances. The Taylors tried to spice up their correspondence with flirtation and references to their times together. In his 3 August 1862 letter to Maggie, Taylor told her to "save that oil--for it is pure olive oil--we may need it for certain particular uses you know. . . ."<sup>104</sup> In contrast to Taylor's blatant reference

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 2, 3 March 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 12 March 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 3, 24 January 1862 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., Folder 8, 3 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.



to sexual intercourse, Maggie's sexual overtones were much more subtle and feminine. Maggie told her husband,

You had better make up your mind to come home soon. My dear, you need me to smooth you down. You have been left to [your]self too long you are spoiled. Come do, if you were near me I could perhaps find time once in a while to smooth your ruffled brow and give you a passing kiss.<sup>105</sup>

These flirtations produced results. Carr, their third son, was conceived during Taylor's furlough of March 1863.<sup>106</sup>

Although the Taylors did not spend considerable time together during the war, the bonds of their marriage proved strong and resilient. On many occasions, Thomas and Maggie reassured one another of their fidelity.<sup>107</sup> However, Taylor once threatened Maggie with infidelity over a letter-writing dispute. In January 1862, Maggie's illness and problems with the mail system resulted in Taylor's not receiving a letter from her for twenty straight days. His entire letter of 28 January 1862 rebuked her for not writing and he told her that he needed all of her "matronly care" to keep him "from temptation." Continuing, Taylor wrote, "Who knows-- Arching eyebrows, raven hair, dimpled cheeks and pouting lips, all rosy with life and radiant with beauty are great

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 4, 14 May 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 13, 20 December 1863 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 8 January 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

seducers and then a scarlet sash and brass buttons carry  
love where 'ere they go."<sup>108</sup> 45

On 30 January 1862, Taylor received a letter from Maggie dated 19 January 1862 and accepted her explanation for not writing between the 8th and 19th of January. He said, "now that we are re-established I trust we shall get along much better."<sup>109</sup> This letter implies that Taylor felt his marriage to be in jeopardy because of Maggie's actions.

Hurt and confused over her husband's accusations in his 28 January 1862 letter, Maggie stated that she had been faithful in writing all along as such,

Well my dear I shall close with the hope that after your reading this, you will think better of your little wife, who has always endeavoured to do her duty in every respect--And hereafter my dear if you do not get my letters, it will be the fault of the mails and not mine for I shall be very particular.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 28 January 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 30 January 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., Folder 4, 10 February 1862 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

Upon receiving his wife's reply to his thinly-veiled threat of infidelity, Taylor stated,

You misread my letter of some date [28 January 1862]. The expression 'pouting lips,' etc. do not apply to you but to myself. I say and meant that possibly such graces etc. might provoke me to a breach of vows and entice me temporarily [sic] from my fidelity to you if you did not stretch forth a hand to save.<sup>111</sup>

This type of argument was an extreme example of the tension that the war created in the Taylor relationship. Their correspondence was usually full of love and flowery language about their feelings for each other. Taylor showered Maggie with consistent praise and accolades proclaiming her beauty, serenity, nobility of character, and flawless disposition.<sup>112</sup> Knowing her husband's penchant for exaggeration, Maggie was very humble about such praise. In a letter dated 16 April 1865, Maggie stated, "My dear, do not think me so divine, or call me an angel when you come to live with me from day to day, you will see so many imperfections, you will be sadly disappointed."<sup>113</sup>

However, Taylor occasionally received letters from his wife that were apparently calculated to ensure that he would feel guilty about decisions he had made or the fact that he

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 14 February 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 1, 5 February 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 16 April 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

was still away from home. Through these caustic letters,<sup>47</sup> Maggie exposed the underlying tension that was caused by Taylor's actions to a point where her frustration became discernible in correspondence. Maggie veiled many of her more bitter opinions in a sarcastic and cutting manner to make her husband feel the pain his actions and decisions caused his family at home. Two of Maggie's most bitter epistles must have cut Taylor to the quick. The letters surely proved their points to Taylor. They also showed that Taylor's perceptions of life in Georgetown were at times unrealistic.

In the first letter, Maggie chastised Taylor for buying something as frivolous as photographs before he took care of outstanding debts. She bemoaned the fact that the family at home had to wait for the basic necessities that were in short supply because of the war.<sup>114</sup> The second letter shows Maggie's frustration over the unrealistic

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 6 November 1864 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

instructions that her husband sent her regarding the workings of the family farm. Maggie's letter of 27 February 1865 stated,

Your letter containing advise [sic] and directions about the place would do very well for a person that had a plantation of negroes but to one situated as I am it is rather perplexing, however I shall use my utmost ability to comply with your every wish.<sup>115</sup>

These letters clearly exhibit Taylor's own self-indulgences that could have been detrimental to his family and show how Taylor's distorted view from the battlefield produced unrealistic requests of his family at home.

The Taylors' devotion to each other was only a part of the underlying strength in their relationship. The Taylors were religious people of the Episcopalian faith, but worshiped in a Methodist Church in Georgetown.<sup>116</sup> Their faith in God was a source of great strength during their trials of the War. At one point, Taylor even considered giving up his law practice to enter the ministry.<sup>117</sup>

In reflection of the war's effect on his relationship with his wife, Taylor looked to God for answers. He stated,

. . . the trials of the present, the inconveniences incident to this mode of life are all incidents to the

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 1, 27 February 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 2, 9 September 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor; Box 1, Folder 16, 19 June 1864 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., Folder 2, 24 September 1861 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

chastening power of the Almighty and are designed as instruments to learn us the relative value of each other and the precious worth of a house in which we both reside.<sup>118</sup>

Through God and faith, the Taylors found the strength that they needed to deal with the atrocities of war and the lengthy separations that the war placed upon them.

Their strong belief in God was emulated in their faith for each other. During the early part of the war, Taylor received no political support from Georgetown and was the object of much ridicule. Taylor wrote his wife and stated, "How I have held my own when all but you predicted failure, when none sympathized but all scoffed at my efforts and cast obstructions in the way of my advance. Could any one but a superhuman power [God] have carried me?"<sup>119</sup>

The Civil War separated many families for extended periods. Although distraught by fear, anxiety, and boredom, the Taylor family survived the constant separations of the Civil War intact. Strong faith in God and each other aided the Taylors in overcoming such emotional obstacles as illness, death, war weariness, and monotony. Creativity, a sense of humor, and fierce determination marked the Taylors' responses to the pangs of separation.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 3, 2 April 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., Folder 6, 15 April 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION--TAYLOR IS THE MAN

While Taylor had strong faith in God, he also had great faith in the capabilities of his wife which only grew stronger as the war progressed. As early as August 1861, Taylor showed his confidence in his wife by naming her the executrix of his will.<sup>120</sup> By the start of 1862, Maggie was handling most of her husband's local business affairs. His advice to her regarding payment of their debts was as follows, "if anything should be required act on your own judgment--don't be afraid of any one. . . ." <sup>121</sup> Taylor's confidence in his wife was evident in his 9 February 1862 letter, "I am glad to see you so independent, don't be run over. . . ." <sup>122</sup> Taylor also felt that because of the possibility of his premature death, he owed it to his wife to acquaint her with his business dealings.<sup>123</sup> He said,

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1, 4 August 1861 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 1 January 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., Folder 4, 9 February 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., Folder 7, 12 June 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

"Don't be bashful, I want you to learn to do business."<sup>124</sup><sup>51</sup>

In April 1863, Taylor gave Maggie power of attorney.<sup>125</sup>

After being wounded in December of 1864, Taylor appointed Maggie his "General Agent." Taylor wrote,

. . . your transactions exhibit such sound descretion [sic], such judicious reasoning. Indeed, I scarcely know which to admire the most the reasoning or the reasoner for the calm dignity with which the views [of] the political economy of my domestic arrangements and the slight forward manner in which she proceeds to administer them.<sup>126</sup>

These examples are concrete evidence that Taylor trusted Maggie and was very proud of the perseverance his wife showed in the handling of his business affairs.

Despite Taylor's confidence in Maggie, she expressed her dislike and even fear of managing business and household affairs.<sup>127</sup> Maggie constantly tried to distance herself from true decision-making by requesting her husband's advice concerning the management of their property, business affairs, children, and finances. She consulted him on what

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., Folder 8, 3 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., Folder 10, 18 April 1863 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., Folder 19, 20 December 1864 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 4, 8 May 1865 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.



kinds of crops to plant, where to plant them, how to maintain and harvest them, and where to store them.<sup>128</sup> To speed her acceptance of decision-making in his absence, Taylor often gave Maggie carte blanche in making improvements to their properties. For example, in his 18 August 1862 letter to Maggie, Taylor told her, "do whatever your three hundred will do towards improving it [their house, garden, fences, etc.] and just as you want to do it--begin whenever you wish. . . ." <sup>129</sup>

Taylor supplied all of the money for his family's welfare. Maggie did not hold employment outside of the home and along the same lines of the "cult of domesticity," she desired to create the perfect home environment for her family. She was dependent upon her husband for income. This caused many problems over the course of the war, as Taylor's efforts to become debt-free involved many transfers of large sums of money with various businessmen in Georgetown.

Money has historically been the root of many problems in marriage, yet the Taylors did not dwell on their financial problems. However, cowering to creditors was

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1, 5 May 1861 and 17 June 1861; Folder 11, 25 August 1863; Folder 12, 4 October 1863; Folder 19, 6 November 1864; Box 2, Folder 3, 14 April 1865 and 23 April 1865 letters from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., Folder 8, 18 August 1862 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

humiliating to Maggie, who was adamant about being debt-<sup>53</sup>  
free. Without punctual money coming from Taylor, Maggie had  
to borrow funds, ask for extensions on notes, and further  
humiliate herself by groveling about money.<sup>130</sup>

As the war progressed, the Taylors came closer to  
financial independence. Taylor sent orders for Maggie to  
pay cash for everything that she purchased and told her not  
to accept any credit. On 26 April 1865, Taylor instructed  
Maggie in settling all accounts and said, "Pay all and  
afterwards do not, on any consideration, open an account  
with anyone. If they won't change your money, leave your  
goods."<sup>131</sup>

In the meantime, Maggie could not let the Taylor  
properties slip into a state of disrepair. She enlisted the  
help of local farmers, businessmen, and craftsmen to provide  
goods and services she needed. Over the course of the war,  
Maggie became adept at handling herself in transactions  
involving men other than her husband. However, it was  
obvious on several occasions that a few of her male business  
associates tried to swindle her. Sometimes Maggie was able  
to catch these men at their game. Other times, she had to  
suffer the consequences of her actions.

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid., Folder 3, 5 January 1862 letter from M.A.  
to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 3, 26 April 1865 letter from  
T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

In early November 1861, Taylor requested that his wife procure a pig for their farm. In her 5 December 1861 letter to her husband, Maggie stated, "Mr. Thomas sent me word yesterday that he was going to kill his hogs, and if I would give him more than the market price I could have one if not he would salt it down. I sent him word to salt away."<sup>132</sup> In this example, Maggie showed her husband that she was well aware of the value of money and would not be cheated.

In early September 1863, the Taylor family began construction of a large stable for their equipment and livestock. Maggie contracted out the work on the barn and oversaw its construction. In her 21 September 1863 letter to her husband, she wrote that the men put the stable up facing in the wrong direction despite her concerns that it was facing the wrong way.<sup>133</sup> This letter points to Maggie's submissiveness like no other. A stable is a major structure on any farm. The position of the stable is usually very important in relation to the house and roads. If the stable was built incorrectly, Taylor could have sued the builders. However, Maggie allowed the construction crew to do as they saw fit with a major construction on the Taylor farm. In all probability, she gave in to the construction crew's

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 3, 5 December 1861 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., Folder 11, 21 September 1863 letter from M.A. to T.T. Taylor.

assumed ability and know-how because she had never been in<sup>55</sup>  
such a position before her husband left home.

Taylor made sure the men of Georgetown did not run over his wife on too many occasions. While Maggie was highly capable, Taylor was sometimes forced to intervene on her behalf. In his 23 September 1863 letter to Maggie, Taylor demanded, "Now I want you to give me full and minute account of your difficulties because I shall write very plainly to the offending parties and assure them that I am still in the land of the living."<sup>134</sup> This meant that Taylor was ready to defend Maggie's honor and dignity against men in Georgetown who took advantage of her while he was gone.

Taylor was determined to remain in control of his wife and family over the course of the war. While he did not dominate Maggie and afforded her much independence where affairs in the home were concerned, he asserted himself as head of the household whether or not he was in Georgetown. Taylor constantly reminded his wife that he would return to Georgetown to take over control of their household and business affairs. In his 13 August 1863 letter to his wife, Taylor ended, "I shall soon be home to take charge of my family and then we will try to enjoy home at least--"<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 23 September 1863 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 13 August 1863 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

Maggie was more than willing to relinquish her position as head of the Taylor household whenever her husband returned from his duties in the war. Though they both became impatient with the extension of his military service past the cessation of hostilities in the spring of 1865, Maggie told Taylor in her 18 June 1865 letter,

Be mild and placid and patient, the end must come. I try to be so, and I am the weaker of the two, and I know you cannot be more anxious, or more disappointed than I.<sup>136</sup>

In this letter, Maggie scripted the words that form the basis of this paper. She considered herself the weaker of the Taylors and this is the foundation upon which she based most of her actions and beliefs during the course of their correspondence.

The bonds produced through letters like Taylor's 2 June 1865 letter to his wife welded the Taylor family together. In it, Taylor stated,

Time and again when I have returned to our home almost discouraged, you, by your cheerfulness, your smiles and quiet self denial, reassured me and sent me forth with new courage and renewed zeal to combat with the world. In all my struggles, you most ably seconded me, was always at hand to suggest reform and retrenchment.<sup>137</sup>

Sentiments like this one throughout the Taylor correspondence leave little doubt that the Taylors found

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 18 June 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., Box 2, Folder 5, 2 June 1865 letter from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

strength through each other. The bonds of love and marriage provided comfort through all of the rough times produced by the Civil War. The separations incurred during the war were made more bearable through vocalization of love, respect, and caring found in all of their letters and their determination to keep their marriage alive through the sheer size of the manuscript collection; the Taylor correspondence proved their relationship's lifeblood.

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of gender relations in the marriage of Thomas and Maggie Taylor during the Civil War. Research suggests that despite Maggie's abilities, she did not desire to usurp her husband's power permanently. Whether the war effected permanent changes in the inner dynamics of the Taylor marriage is unknown. Without post-war knowledge about Thomas and Maggie Taylor's marriage and their attitudes concerning gender relations, all conclusions made about the evolution of their relationship beyond their Civil War correspondence are purely speculative. However, it seems highly unlikely that Maggie would ever assert herself beyond her position in the Taylor household of wife and mother given the attitudes expressed in her letters throughout the war.

In conclusion, it seems evident that Maggie evolved her independence in a way opposite of what many contemporary thinkers would expect. Maggie was a capable woman who was

treated as an equal on many levels by her husband despite the rhetoric of dominant man and submissive woman that leaps forth from their correspondence. Taylor trusted his wife's judgment in most aspects of decision-making during his absence. While Taylor often stated that he was the master of his family and was ultimately responsible for their well-being, he nonetheless respected Maggie and seriously considered her ideas and opinions.<sup>138</sup> In this atmosphere of mutual respect and admiration, the Taylor family survived the flames of war and the fire of the homefront.

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., Box 1, Folder 8, 10 August 1862; Folder 11, 13 August 1863; Box 2, Folder 5, 2 June 1865 letters from T.T. to M.A. Taylor.

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